

Division offers students low-cost legal aid

By JIM ALLEN
Of the Emerald

The cost of legal counsel in today's world has been skyrocketing everywhere — except at the University.

The Legal Services division of the ASUO has provided low-cost legal counsel to students since 1969. Legal Services, located in Room 16 in the EMU basement, is supported by an annual \$22,000 ASUO grant, and utilizes the ser-

vices of two lawyers and three work-study students.

Robert Ackerman, a University graduate and lawyer, has worked in Legal Services since 1971, when the program was first funded by the ASUO. Ackerman shares the work load with Helen Rockett on a combined 30-hour work week, seeing students by appointment and helping them solve legal problems.

"We serve about 1,500 to 1,700 students a year, and help 85 to 95 per cent of those students with

their particular legal problems," said Ackerman. "We receive about \$20,000 from the ASUO for our operating budget (\$2,000 goes to the work-study students), so our cost to the average student per year is only \$1.50. That's only about 50 cents a term."

Legal Services covers a wide variety of legal affairs in the campus community, including landlord-tenant relationships, real estate problems, shoplifting and auto insurance. Usually these

problems can be settled in small claims court, in which case legal services will represent the student for only a small fee.

Landlords are a typical problem for some University students. This usually involves payment of a "damage deposit" to cover any damage the student may cause. Often, the landlord refuses to return this deposit at the end of the contract. Legal Services can intervene on the side of students, provided they haven't actually damaged the landlord's property.

Sheer ignorance of the service's existence has kept down the office's workload, according to Ackerman, who estimates only about one-third of University students know about Legal Services.

Among the more common aids rendered by Legal Services are name changes, "union dissolutions" or divorces and expunctions of criminal records. "We get about 70 or 80 name changes each year," Ackerman said, "and it costs the student nothing."

The entire concept of prepaid legal services is not new. The concept has been employed by labor unions and others for some time, but it was only eight years ago that universities began to adopt the idea.

In 1969, the University of Texas, the University of Massachusetts and the University of Oregon began a program which has since spread to literally hundreds of colleges and universities throughout the nation.

Legal Services emerged here after the ASUO found it necessary to seek legal counsel to solve a financial dispute with the administration. Two years later, in 1971, the ASUO began to fund Legal Services in its present form.

During the last few years, the scope of legal services has increased steadily, expanding areas in which it can represent students. The director of the ASUO's Office of Student Advocacy who oversees the division's operations is collecting a group of law students to research certain legal problems, lightening the load on Ackerman and his staff.

Remedies culture shock, confusion

Center orients students to new society

By DAVID KENSLE
Of the Emerald

Culture nights featuring dinners, films, speakers and dances focusing on the ethnic traditions of a specific country will be more prevalent on campus next term if Anjum Kazi, the new director of the Foreign Student Organization (FSO), has his way.

Kazi was appointed to the FSO post about three weeks ago, although he has been involved with the organization as a volunteer for nearly three years. Kazi says one of his goals is to spark interest in FSO among both foreign and native students.

"We are trying to get more people aware of this organization," he says. Kazi explains that the FSO is a service available to all University students. It is made up of sub-organizations with each country having its own group. Currently there are 69 countries represented on campus.

Kazi says the FSO is remodeling and ex-

panding its reference library and he encourages students who are planning to visit or have a certain interest in another country to come to the FSO office or its reference library for information.

All foreign students coming to campus are automatically members of the FSO, says Kazi. Currently, 600 of the 764 registered foreign students are represented by the FSO. The others are represented by the Chinese Student Association.

According to Kazi, who is from Pakistan, the FSO is here to help foreign students with their problems.

"Most foreign students go through complete culture shock when they come over here," he says. He feels that as director he is better able to cope with the problems that foreign students encounter than a native citizen.

"I feel that I have an advantage because I am a foreign student and I know the people and their traditions," Kazi says. "I've been through the same culture shock these students

have been through."

He says his culture shock was less intense than what most foreign students face because a good friend came along to help him get acquainted with things.

"I was a little unsure of myself and my English was not good," says Kazi. "However, I lived in the dorms and I gradually became adjusted to society."

The FSO helps put on a foreign orientation program at the beginning of the school year to help foreign students overcome any problems they may encounter. Checking accounts and how to obtain one, academic advising, money exchanges, language problems and transportation are among the topics discussed.

Foreign students are also given a "guidebook for international students" to help facilitate their transition. They are also encouraged to become acquainted with the FSO and the services it offers. The FSO office is in 203 EMU, telephone 686-4387.



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